



DCH Team,

It's hard to believe that it has already been two months since I walked through the doors of DCH as Commissioner. While I am still constantly listening to and learning from you, I am infusing my own way of working into what we are doing as an agency. As I have mentioned to you previously, I believe strongly in the power of data and using that data to inform how we can best operate. As such, I am working with leadership to think about how we can be more transparent across the enterprise with data and performance measures that will ensure we are serving Georgians to our fullest capacity. Please stay tuned for more details.

I want to start by addressing the recent surge in COVID-19 cases not only in our state, but across much of the country. We are seeing peak levels in positive cases that are expected to continue through at least Labor Day. And while I know we're all looking forward to the upcoming four-day weekend, I want to encourage everyone to remain safe and do your part to mitigate the spread of the virus. Please avoid large gatherings if you can, practice social distancing, and wear your mask. And, perhaps most importantly, consider using this Friday to get the vaccine if you have not already done so.



Earlier this month in the Board meeting, one of the things I touched on in my remarks is all the great work I see daily around me at DCH. It's clear there are a lot of talented people in our midst, and one of my priorities is to enhance and highlight that work to an even greater extent so that this agency's accomplishments are appropriately recognized. Not only do we want to hear from the executive leadership team, executive directors, and division/office leads, but I would also like to see more of you participating and representing your respective divisions and offices in some of our meetings. I'm looking forward to seeing that goal come to fruition.

Also, during the first Board meeting in August, Louis Amis, the executive director for the State Health Benefit Plan Division, presented the 2022 plan year rates and designs. In this month's edition of *DCHNOW!*, Louis gives a general overview of the rates, which I'm pleased to say will remain flat, new wellness initiatives, and his expectations for his team moving forward. Like me, Louis is a relative newbie to the agency, and I commend him on an outstanding job on his first presentation to the Board. In our second August Board meeting, Chief Financial Officer Lisa Walker presented our Amended Fiscal Year 2022 and Fiscal Year 2023 budget requests to the Board for their approval. Managing a budget exceeding \$17 billion is no easy feat, and I am

pleased with the continued focus of our agency to direct over 97 percent of state funds to services and benefits supporting our constituents' health care needs.

Elsewhere, the Program Management Office (PMO) has been hard at work updating the agency's strategic plan. I know I speak for PMO Director Shawn Walker when I say thank you to many of you who have taken time out of your busy schedules to contribute your updates to the plan, which serves as a reference point on where we stand in relation to achieving our goals for fiscal years 2020 – 2023. The strategic update is due to the Office of Planning and Budget in early September, and we are offering you a quick snapshot into our submittal.

Finally, even as we work remotely, I feel a sense of urgency to do what I can to meet more of you face to face, even if it's in a virtual setting. To that end, I'm inviting you to sign up for one of the "Coffee with Commissioner" sessions taking place in September – one on the 23rd (10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.) and one on the 28th (10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.). You can confirm your attendance by emailing the Office of Communications at dch.communication@dch.ga.gov. Each session will be limited to 15 people so I can have a little more personal time with those who are confirmed as attendees. If you are unable to attend in September, please consider signing up for other sessions in the coming months.

Before I close, I'm reiterating for now, that no immediate changes are in place to physically return to the office as we continue to determine the appropriate environmental plan that works for our people. The office is open for those of you who have to come in periodically for on-site services. Also, as an additional measure of safety, the Georgia Capitol Police maintains a physical presence on Lower Wall off Kimball Way from 6am-10am and 2pm-6pm if this resource is needed.

In the meantime, please know that I'd love to hear from you. If you have any questions for me, please feel free to reach out.

Thank you for all you do for the communities we serve.

Caylee

DCHNOW! Spotlight – State Health Benefit Plan

If you blinked too fast, you probably missed a few of the changes that have taken place within the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) Division over the past year. No worries if you missed a few of those key moments; the notable differences will be spotlighted within the next few paragraphs.

In early June, the SHBP Division welcomed its new executive director, Louis Amis. Louis came to DCH from the City of Atlanta, where he served as the City's Employee Benefits Director for the past 15 years. While there, he was responsible for providing strategic leadership and management of the City's Insurance Benefits Plans, Pension Plan, and Leave Administration Plan. Since arriving to the agency, Louis has hit the ground running preparing for one of the most important time periods within the state fiscal year: open enrollment season. The 2021 Open Enrollment (OE) period for the 2022 Plan Year will begin on Monday October 18, 2021, and continue through Friday, November 5, 2021, allowing active and retiree SHBP members to select the health care option that best suits their needs.



**Louis Amis, Executive Director,
State Health Benefit Plan**

Earlier in the month, Louis presented the 2021 plan year rates and designs to the DCH Board of Directors. Active members and Pre-65 retirees can expect rates to remain flat this year, with no changes to copays, co-insurance or deductibles.

For our Medicare Eligible Retirees Age 65 or Older, the Medicare Advantage Standard and Premium Plan Options will continue to be offered by Anthem and UnitedHealthcare.

"I am aware that this time of the year can sometimes be a source of nervousness and concern for our members as they await the news regarding what their benefits may look like in the coming year," said Louis. "Our team has been diligently working with our providers to ensure we are presenting options that are better aligned with our members' individual needs, as well as the needs of their families. I am pleased that we were once again able to provide excellent options this year that are not inclusive of a rate increase."

To better assist members in choosing the option for their lifestyle, SHBP will offer both teleconferences and interactive webinars that will include live question and answer sessions with the providers.

“The interactive portion is definitely a big change from last year,” states Louis. “We will have representatives from each of the providers readily available to answer questions. We’ve also included a webinar for active members this year as well, where in the past, we’ve only done those for the retirees. While technology will play a major role in ensuring that we adequately educate our members on their options, we also remain cognizant of the fact that some of our members may not be as technologically savvy, so we’ve made sure to maintain the telephone meetings as well.”

While members may notice that the current plan does not have any significant changes, there will be two notable enhancements included – bariatric surgery and a program geared towards pre-diabetics:

“We all know that diabetes can be a costly disease, and Georgia is one of the states leading that number in terms of cases,” continued Louis. “We are also seeing a significant increase in juvenile diabetes – so it’s having an impact on not only our employees, but also their dependents. Through the ‘Diabetes Prevention Program,’ our goal is to focus on awareness, and prevent those who may be in the pre-diabetic stage from going to the next level of being fully diagnosed.”

With Sharecare staying onboard as the wellness program administrator, members can continue to look forward to engaging in programs targeted to individual wellness journeys. These programs, housed under the ShareCare Digital Therapeutics program, offer wellness strategies and techniques within a digital platform. **Serenity Now** is a suite of programs, which is offered at no additional cost to SHBP or the members, that includes four evidenced-based digital therapeutics shown to improve mental health and manage cravings. SHBP members will have access to two new additional **Serenity Now** Programs in 2022:

- **Breathe** – A new offering, “Breathe” is a health and fitness app focusing on relaxation and meditation. Included in the app is a 10-day video course on stress management, simple but effective breathing exercises, mindfulness tools, sleep help, and relaxation videos aimed at supporting a calmer and less distracted you.
- **Eat Right Now** – Another new offering, “Eat Right Now” is a daily app-based program focused on managing and controlling food cravings. It helps rewire the brain to identify stress and emotional eating patterns, reduce cravings and build sustainable, healthy habits naturally.
- **Unwinding Anxiety** – This is a step-by-step program available via your smartphone or tablet that offers daily guidance on uncovering anxiety triggers, identifying anxiety habits, and assisting with learning specific anti-anxiety tools.
- **Craving to Quit®** – This program offers a 21-day step-by-step guide aimed at the cessation of smoking and vaping.

EXECUTING THROUGH TEAMWORK

Although Louis is a new face on the SHBP team, very little else has changed among the team over the past year since we last visited with them. The massive amount of work that is done through the program is representative of the efforts put forth by roughly 35 individuals who make up the SHBP Division.

The Clinical Wellness and Quality Performance unit, led by Deputy Executive Director Cathy Craven, works directly with our pharmacy and wellness vendors to monitor fraud, waste, abuse and the overall quality of the vendor programs and customer support. The Eligibility and Benefits Administration (EBA) unit, led by Deputy Executive Director Lekeisha Johnson, manages SHBP Member and Employer Services and vendors responsible for services like the enrollment portal, member and employer billing, qualifying events, and COBRA.

After being in the role of executive director for a few months, Louis has had some time to reflect on a few key items that he, along with his other team members, are looking to enhance in the coming year. And, looking at the to-do list, there is one key area he's really focusing on: customer service. As a program area that touches so many Georgians directly, he is intentional on ensuring that members are thoroughly educated on the services that are being provided by SHBP. This means, on the SHBP side, that team members are consistent in responding to both internal and external customers in a timely manner and remaining proactive and engaged in helping those customers adequately resolve pressing and difficult issues.

"We remain steadfast in continuing on the path of incorporating strategies and techniques that improve our members' health," continues Louis. "In order for us to be successful in our roles, it is critical that we continue to cultivate an environment where members are committed to being more involved in their health care decision-making processes. Our ultimate goal is to provide resources that are engaging and suitable for their lifestyles, and we strongly encourage that they actively make use of those resources that are readily available to them."

Additional information regarding the plan offerings will be available on the [SHBP microsite](#) via the [DCH webpage](#).

Program Management Office Working to Finalize Agency's Strategic Plan Update

Every four years, state agencies are required to submit their strategic plans to the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) for review. And, while the agency is currently operating in the Fiscal Year 2020 – 2023 strategic plan, agencies are also allowed to update that plan on a yearly basis. As a result of the global pandemic, DCH is taking the opportunity to revise its previously submitted plan to better reflect how COVID-19 has impacted the agency's ability to meet its goals. The Program Management Office (PMO), led by Shawn Walker, does the heavy lifting in developing and updating the plan, working with divisions and offices throughout DCH to better understand their individual goals, and using that information to revise the previously submitted strategy plan as needed.

"When developing or even updating the four-year strategic plan, the keyword 'alignment' must always be top of mind," says Shawn. "We have our overall state goals, buoyed by three key focal points – our agency goals, our enterprise-level goals, as well as a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). Each one of those focal points must be aligned and in sync to help our agency answer OPB's two most important questions within the update: 'What activities are we currently engaged in that further support the overarching state goals, and how is the agency progressing against those goals?' That update may also include further details regarding the strengths that we are leveraging, the weaknesses that we are addressing, the opportunities that we are taking advantage of, and some of the threats we are working to overcome. This upcoming update will address where we are in achieving the goals that will eventually measure our success – ensuring that we are continuously maintaining accountability for our results."



**Shawn Walker, Director,
Program Management Office**

Currently, the PMO is working with Commissioner Noggle to finalize this year's update to the strategic plan. In addition to amendments being made to key goals, projects and measures put in place pre-COVID, Commissioner Noggle is also including a new goal related to Key Performance Initiatives. This goal, focusing on accountability and transparency, will further demonstrate how effectively the agency is achieving key business objectives. More information regarding the new initiative will be communicated to the agency at large within the coming months.

This year's updated strategic plan is due to OPB on September 1.



Excitement Abounds for Electronic Visit Verification Implementation

The statewide implementation of the Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) system, a technology that automates documentation of the services provided by home healthcare providers, began in April 2018 with DCH hosting in-person forums for providers to introduce them to the new tool. Since that time, providers have been quite attentive to understanding the innovative process – steadily learning how the system works through multiple EVV-related trainings. As the October deadline for full implementation and claims reporting is fast approaching, the anticipation and excitement is soaring! After more than three years of planning and coordination, EVV is expected to be fully implemented here in Georgia before the end of year.

For those unfamiliar with the process, the technology gathers information such as time, attendance, and care plan information when a home health care worker is on-site performing duties. EVV reduces the amount of paper used to document routine healthcare services, saves time for the health care provider, and streamlines the process for claims and repayment. While the state's EVV solution provider is Conduent and Netsmart, healthcare providers are free to use their preferred EVV solution.

For the past two years, the DCH team has been diligently working in preparation for implementing the federal mandate. Brian Dowd, LeeClois Bolar, Rebecca Duggar and Lynnette Rhodes have led the charge at DCH, with the support of multiple DCH colleagues, contractors at North Highland and vendors at Conduent and Netsmart. In the spirit of communication, customer service, teamwork and accountability, the teams have been working collectively to provide ongoing, actionable information to their EVV audiences.

“The EVV team would like to thank everyone who has and continues to dedicate time to the implementation of EVV,” says LeeClois Bolar, Project Manager. “We are excited about this technology which will help increase transparency, reduce fraud, and increase reliable service for our members.”

Prior to the upcoming launch, members, providers, and third-party vendors have remained updated about the forthcoming offering via email, social media, [the DCH website](#), and phone calls. They've also had the opportunity to participate in virtual townhalls (hosted by DCH) as well as in-depth technical trainings with representatives from Conduent and Netsmart. Questions raised during the townhalls and/or submitted to the EVV inbox are collected into FAQ's that are posted on the [EVV microsite](#) for the appropriate audience as an additional resource for information. Medicaid-funded programs that will participate in EVV include: Service Options Using Resources in a

Community Environment (SOURCE), New Options Waiver (NOW), Comprehensive Supports Waiver Program (COMP), and the Independent Care Waiver Program (ICWP).

By August 31st, all providers are required to have their employees added as users into their EVV account and must have submitted at least one EVV-related claim. Later this fall, on October 1, 2021, the expectation is that providers will be fully engaged in submitting all EVV-related claims to the State EVV solution.

For additional information about EVV, please visit the [microsite](#) on the DCH website.



SIGN UP FOR “COFFEE WITH COMMISSIONER” today! We have two sessions taking place in September for you to choose from:

- September 23rd (10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.) or
- September 28th (10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.)

You can confirm your attendance by emailing the Office of Communications at dch.communication@dch.ga.gov with the day you'd like to participate.

**Each session will be limited to 15 people. If you are unable to attend in September, please consider choosing and signing up for an alternate session in the coming months.*

Quick Relaxation Tip:



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
OF COMMUNITY HEALTH

Lunch-Time
YOGA

Take a 15 minute
yoga break during lunch!

AUGUST SPOTLIGHT – “EMPLOYEE KUDOS”

Kudos to You, Raymond!



“Thanks Raymond for assisting the hospital providers with their logins to the new banking system.”

From: Kim Morris

This month’s **Employee Kudos** spotlight shoutout goes out to Raymond Simon! Kim Morris, Director of Reimbursement Services, sent Raymond a **KUDOS** for his hard work in helping the hospital providers with their banking system logins. DCH switched banks for payment submissions, and a few healthcare providers were having issues logging in to the system to meet an upcoming payment deadline. Raymond stepped up to help each provider individually, on top of his everyday tasks. Since the logins involved using confidential banking information, he took the time to assist each provider individually until they were able to log in. Kim thought he showed good customer service in helping them, and she noted that the providers were incredibly grateful for his work as well. She thought a shoutout was appropriate – and we agree!

COVID-19

Get the latest updates about vaccines, testing, how to protect yourself and get care: [COVID-19 and vaccines](#).

Looking for care options? Start with an [e-Visit](#) to share your symptoms and get guidance for care. Or, to talk to an advice nurse 24/7, call 1-855-512-5997.

The 2021 Wellness Program

FIVE SIMPLE ACTIVITIES
TO EARN UP TO

\$1,000*

Click to learn more.



Click to learn more.:

<https://my.kp.org/shbp/wellness-program/>

Getting your biometric and preventative screenings

Do you still need a biometric screening or age and gender appropriate preventative screening? Complete both at a Kaiser Permanente medical facility. To schedule an appointment, sign in to [kp.org](#). Wondering if you are already up to date on your screenings? Visit [kp.org/engage](#) and look for your green checkmarks.



Your healthy weight for life



Maintaining a healthy weight means making small changes that add up to big success. No matter what your goal is — participate in sports, boost your confidence, fit into your favorite jeans, get your family's weight on track, reduce or prevent health problems — we've got the information and tools to help you succeed.

[Learn more here.](#)

What's so great about exercise?

Exercising regularly can help your physical and mental health. And when you exercise, you're not just burning calories. You're also helping your body to:

- control appetite
- feel more energetic and relaxed
- jumpstart your metabolism so you keep burning fat even after your workout
- reduce the health risks of extra weight
- relieve stress



[Let's get started!](#)

A healthier way of thinking



Having a positive mental outlook can encourage overall wellbeing. But sometimes, our mind focuses on unwanted or negative thoughts. These thoughts can make you feel anxious or depressed and may keep you from enjoying your life.

Healthy thinking can teach you to know which thoughts affect problems or feelings that trouble you. With practice, you can learn to use thoughts that encourage you instead of thoughts that discourage you. Learn more about the [path to healthier thinking](#).

Get moving with ClassPass

Kaiser Permanente has partnered with ClassPass, a fitness membership program, to offer no-cost and discounted access to virtual and in-person fitness and exercise classes through multiple gyms and studios across the country.

Kaiser Permanente members can get free access to the on-demand library and a discount on membership plans for livestreaming and in-person classes.



[Find up more and sign up today!](#)

Join us for Yoga at the Battery Atlanta!



When: Mondays at 6:30 pm, weather permitting, and excluding game days.

Who: ***All are invited.*** Make sure to register first since space is limited to allow for social distancing.

What to bring: Water, a mat, and a

friend!

Cost: No charge

[Get more information.](#)

Egg, Tomato, and Avocado Sandwich

Healthy Substitutions

Replace high-fat mayonnaise with heart-healthy avocado

The benefits

Traditional store-bought mayonnaise is high in salt and unhealthy fats, which may help raise your risk of high blood pressure, obesity, and heart disease.^{1,2} Instead:

- This recipe replaces mayonnaise with creamy avocado. Considered “nature’s butter,” it provides heart-healthy monounsaturated fat. It’s also rich in nutrients including folate, potassium, and vitamins K, C B5, B6, and E.^{3,4}
- An English muffin provides two servings of whole grains, which helps reduce the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and some forms of cancer.^{5,6}
- Tomato is considered a “superfood” because it is packed with nutrients that help protect against high blood pressure, heart disease, and even cancer.⁷



INGREDIENTS

1 whole-grain English muffin

1 hard or soft boiled egg (sliced)

¼ avocado

1 tomato slice

PREPARATION

Combine the above ingredients.

Time-saving tip: Hardboil some eggs and refrigerate (in shells) for an afternoon snack or to put on your salad and enjoy for up to a week.

¹ SFGate: *The Disadvantages of Mayonnaise* (accessed October 2020): healthyeating.sfgate.com.

² Mayo Clinic: *Heart-healthy diet: 8 steps to prevent heart disease* (accessed October 2020): [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org).

³ Medical News Today: *Everything you need to know about avocado* (accessed October 2020): [medicalnewstoday.com](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com).

⁴ Healthline: *12 Proven Health Benefits of Avocado* (accessed October 2020): [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com).

⁵ Oldways Whole Grains Council: *How Much Whole Grain is Enough?* (accessed October 2020): [wholegrainscouncil.org](https://www.wholegrainscouncil.org).

⁶ WebMD: *Tips for Reaping the Benefits of Whole Grains* (accessed October 2020): [webmd.com](https://www.webmd.com).

⁷ Medical News Today: *Everything you need to know about tomatoes* (accessed October 2020): [medicalnewstoday.com](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com).

⁸ American Egg Board: *How Long Do Eggs Last* (accessed October 2020): [incredibleegg.org](https://www.incredibleegg.org).



The Downside of Not Getting Enough Sleep

If you rarely get the recommended seven to nine hours of sleep a night for adults, you're not alone.

Millions of Americans struggle to catch zzz's. Losing sleep can affect your well-being in a number of ways:

- Your emotions may go haywire
- You may have difficulty remembering things
- You might gain weight
- Your risk of accidents rises

While getting more sleep might sound like a problem without a solution, *Be Well SHBP* has tools and tips to get you snoozing soundly. Login or create your account today to learn more.

Sharecare, Inc. administers the *Be Well SHBP* program for the State Health Benefit Plan. c 2021 Sharecare, Inc.

For more information, visit BeWellSHBP.com/Sleep or call 888-616-6411.